



**Are you aged between 12 and 24 years old? Then this is your space, join in the fun**

Whangarei Youth Space is a safe and fun place where you can meet friends, get involved in what's on, find a mentor, join in school holiday activities, access free, private, youth health services and get training and employment support.

**How you can contact us at Whangarei Youth Space**

Email: [contact@youthspace.co.nz](mailto:contact@youthspace.co.nz)  
Phone: 09 972 7248  
Text: 021 765 838  
Fax: 09 972 7249  
Post: PO Box 1483  
Whangarei 0140  
[www.youthspace.co.nz](http://www.youthspace.co.nz)

Youth health enquiries contact a nurse on 021 756 724

Like us on Facebook:  
Whangarei Youth Space

**Octane**  
youth health

Supporting young people to live healthy lives

## Young leader motivates

When Whangarei Youth Space Youth Worker Jackson Moetara was going through some pretty dark times in his life, people had faith in him and saw his potential.

Their belief and support helped him through those times, ultimately inspiring him to volunteer for youth work and find a paid career in the area. Working at Youth Space, he has also been studying, and just finished his Diploma in Youth Studies.

Now he is one of the leaders at Youth Space, organising all sorts of activity-based learning that goes on at the space. He is mainly involved in teaching life skills through sports, but there are lots of other things offered there too. Things like arts and craft, music, spoken word and community volunteering.

"These programmes are all fun and there is something for every sort of person, outgoing, shy, sporty, academic, artistic. They are all just fun things to do, but at the same time they are vehicles for learning about life and what is important. Sports can teach people about turning up on time, communicating, working in a team, learning to take charge."

Jackson describes some of the things he has learnt about working with young people in his own words:

**How long have you lived in Whangarei?**

Most of my life but have also lived in Perth and Brisbane.

**Tell us briefly about your study and work pathway to date.**

I finished school when I was 15 and worked various jobs including rubbish truck work, mining, concreting and hospitality. Three years ago I started volunteering at the Space, which lead to short term casual contracts and then I was successful in my application for the "youth worker in training role." Two years have passed and I have just completed my Diploma of Youth and Community Studies.

**What is your role with young people?**

To build connections with our young people, to journey with them and to help them identify their potential and strengths for themselves. My role is to make relationships with and walk alongside young people to help them achieve their goals to ultimately fulfil their potential.

**Your passion for getting the best outcomes for young people, where does that come from?**

Probably knowing that most young people will go through some type of hardship in their life where they'll need some support. Personally, I ended up in some pretty dark places when I was young so I decided that I would try to be a support person for the next generation.

**What do you think needs to change to improve things for young people in Whangarei?**

What I've observed from my time as a young person and my work with young people is that many of the issues that we're seeing could be prevented through work done with younger children and with families. I think there needs to be more education for parents around youth development in the earlier years of their child's life. If we could implement more preventative initiatives on a larger scale, our young people might be better off.

**How do you start a conversation with someone that you think may be struggling?**

I'd start it like I'd start any other conversation, "Hey, what you been up to today?" I'd then ask open-ended questions to allow the young person to tell their story themselves. I've also found it better to ask a young person if they are struggling 'straight up' instead of beating around the bush. If we don't ask our young people the hard questions, they won't give us answers and share their struggles.

**What signs/signals do you think carers and friends can look for when they have a concern that a young person isn't OK?**

- Distancing themselves from friends and family.
- Risk-taking behaviour out of the norm for the young person



Youth Worker Jackson Moetara

eg. if a young person was to start drinking a lot of alcohol.

- Look for young people that are not following their normal routines.
- Unmotivated - may not want to get up in the morning.
- Disconnected - may not want to spend time with friends/families like they usually would or doing activities they usually enjoyed.
- Talk of hopelessness.

**Can you share three top tips to help a young person who may be at risk?**

1. Find people you can trust and talk to them about how you're feeling.
2. Find things that give you enjoyment.
3. Consider your risk-taking behaviours (ie. drugs/alcohol/smoking) and how these might be affecting your mood. Ask for help; there's lots available.

**Do you have any favourite resources you use to support young people or their carers?**

I really rate the support the team at Need to Talk 1737 give. Need to Talk is free counsellor service that you can txt or call any time, day or night. They are there for you 24 hrs a day.

**What would you say to a carer that had a worry about someone?**

To let the young person know they care about them. Ask if they could support them in anyway. They could come talk to the team here at WYS and get some advice but if they feel like the person is at risk to themselves or others to ring the police immediately on 111.

**What would you say to a young person that was struggling and feeling sad/depressed/lonely/bullied?**

I would listen to and acknowledge their situation. Again, I would ask open ended questions to enable the young person to tell me what the positive things are in their life and identify hope for themselves. Also letting them know we are here to support them if they want to talk more - and supporting them to access help, whether that be with our health team or other support services.

**What would Whangarei look like without WYS?**

I think there would definitely be a lot more bored and disconnected youth if WYS wasn't open, or maybe finding belonging in less positive circles.

### Helplines for children and young people

Youthline – 0800 376 633, free text 234, [talk@youthline.co.nz](mailto:talk@youthline.co.nz) or [www.youthline.co.nz/services/goforward/go-chat/thelowdown.co.nz](http://www.youthline.co.nz/services/goforward/go-chat/thelowdown.co.nz)  
email [team@thelowdown.co.nz](mailto:team@thelowdown.co.nz), free text 5626  
or free text / phone 1737 anytime for support from a trained counsellor

### Help for parents, family and friends

Commonground – [www.commonground.org.nz](http://www.commonground.org.nz)  
Parent Help – 0800 568 856  
Family Services 211 Helpline – 0800 211 211  
Skylight – 0800 299 100